**Schervenstad (Shard City)**

**Hanan Faour**

translated by Elisabeth Salverda

After Isaac left, everything changed. We became magnetically charged, both positive or both negative, and it felt like everything in the world, every branch, stone and drop of water, started to vibrate when we got too close.

All possible encounters were unconsciously prevented: Isaac booked holidays to the Netherlands when I was at festivals abroad, I did not tell him about my trip to Nicosia and a week later he posted photos of him and his friends at a wedding in the Greek part of Cyprus. When Isaac made a surprise visit to mum at Christmas two years ago, I was in London with Roos, Lena and Ines. Three days later on our return journey, a train delay meant I didn’t get home until eleven at night, when Isaac had just left to visit a friend in Dusseldorf.

If I dwell on the moments that we’ve deprived ourselves, and each other, without realising, I feel sick. I don’t know if we can still catch up on everything we’ve missed:

 all our own birthdays, and those of our parents and grandparents, the 18, 50, and 75 flags we hang by the front door,

 shared nerves for our final exam where we accidentally meet in the kitchen at 3 am, sharing a box of cereal while trying to memorise the most important parts of our history textbook,

 trips to Ikea when leaving home, and having to rent a van because the mattresses do not fit in the car,

 getting our driver’s licenses, me first and him half a year later, how we argue about who gets to take the car on Friday night, our first time through the McDrive,

 each other’s first real loves and first real heartaches,

 all the inside jokes that could have arisen during dinner, car rides, train rides, holidays, and Sunday morning breakfasts,

 the 11 years, more than four thousand days, almost six million minutes apart

Is he still my brother, or a stranger with whom I shared a womb? What does our genetic makeup mean if I can’t remember what his voice sounds like without the filter of electronics, whether he’s a morning or evening person, what drinks he orders in restaurants and how purple the circles under his eyes are when he’s stayed up all night? I see my bike mechanic more than I call Isaac.